

# Buckle Up, Everyone, Every Time!



## Child Safety Seats and Safety Belts

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida Department of Transportation are working to ensure everyone is properly secured and safe every trip, every time. Simply put, **no trip is too short to not buckle up!**

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers should refer to the following guidelines for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on their ages and sizes. Children of all ages, from infants to grade schoolers, tend to move to the next step of restraint sooner than they need to. Some infants are moved out of their rear-facing restraints too soon, and some toddlers are moved out of front-facing child seats before they're big enough for boosters. The guidelines are listed below:

In this brochure you will find life-saving information. Please read carefully and remember there is no need to sacrifice safety when we can all become better informed on how to properly protect our loved ones and ourselves when behind the wheel of a car.

## Step 1

### Rear-Facing Seats:

For the best possible protection, place infants in the back seat of your vehicle in rear-facing child safety seats. Rear-facing seats are the safest way to transport an infant and should be used until the child no longer meets the height or weight limit of the particular seat.



## Step 2

### Forward-Facing Seats:

When children outgrow their rear-facing seats, (at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats installed in the back seat of the car. They should continue riding in the forward-facing seat until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).

## Step 3

### Booster Seats:

Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats, (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds) they should ride in booster seats in the back seat of the car. They should continue riding in booster seats until the vehicle safety belts fit properly. Safety belts fit properly when the lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when the children are 4'9" tall).



Low-Back Booster Seat

High-Back Booster Seat



## Step 4

### Safety Belts:

When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult safety belts in the back seat, if they fit properly (lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest). Children 13 and older can ride buckled up in the front seat.

*It is important for parents to remember that they need to be good role models. If they always wear their safety belts, they will help their children form lifelong habits of buckling up.*

## Child Safety Seat Installation



child safety seat instructions, in addition to vehicle owner manual instructions regarding installation, could result in serious injury or death as a result of an improperly installed child safety seat.

**The Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH)** system makes child safety

According to research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, three out of four child safety seats are improperly installed. Failure to read the

seat installation easier — without using safety belts — and is required on child safety seats and most vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2002. (LATCH is not required for booster seats, car beds and vests.)

Attachments on a LATCH-equipped child safety seat fasten to lower anchors and a tether anchor in a LATCH-equipped vehicle. The top tether strap is located at the top rear of convertible child safety seats, forward-facing toddler seats, and combination seats. Most rear-facing infant seats do not have a top tether strap or hook as they do not generally use this equipment for installation. The lower anchor straps are attached to the rear of the child safety seat. Most U.S.

child safety seats come with flexible lower attachments. A few models of child safety seats have rigid lower attachments. Most LATCH-equipped vehicles have lower anchors in the right and left rear seat positions. If the center seat doesn't have lower anchors, you can install your child safety seat securely using a safety belt.

Be sure to carefully read your vehicle owner's manual to find out where the LATCH indicators and hooks are located in your particular vehicle and to avoid confusing them with other vehicle hardware such as luggage tie-downs. Child safety seats that are not LATCH-equipped or are older than five years should not be used.

## Did You Know?

- All children under 13 should ride in the back seat. Generally, children 13 years and older can safely ride buckled up in the front seat.
- Expectant mothers should wear the lap belt across the hips and below the belly with the shoulder belt across the chest (between the breasts).
- Florida's Primary Safety Belt Law passed on June 30, 2009. This means officers may stop motor vehicles for front seat occupants or occupants under 18 failing to wear safety belts. Tickets will be issued. The Child Restraint Law has always been a primary law. Any driver can be stopped for not having a child under age four in a child seat.
- Many people tend to move their child to the next step of restraint sooner than needed. Remember to keep your child in the right size child safety seat or booster seat until the safety belt fits correctly.

## There's More...

For more information on child safety seats and safety belts, please visit [www.flhsmv.gov/fhp/cps](http://www.flhsmv.gov/fhp/cps) and [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

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